

WESTMINSTER COURT OF SEWERS.

The first meeting of the Court for the year 1846 took place on Friday, the 2nd instant. Captain Bague was voted to the chair. The collectors' reports were received. The cash at the bankers was declared to be 15,388. 6s. 10d. The officers' salaries to Christmas were paid, 642. 10s., and after some routine business, the great feature in the first Court in every year, for many years, was commenced:—

No. 8, on the business paper, "ANNUAL NOMINATION OF CHAIRMAN to take place between the hours of two and three o'clock. In consequence of the retirement of the present chairman, the proposition of another commissioner or commissioners for the office must be then made, and a subsequent day fixed upon for deciding the appointment."

Mr. Knight, of Blooms-street, proposed Capt. Bague, R.N.; but the gallant officer immediately declined being put in nomination. No other person having been proposed, the office of annual chairman to the Westminster Commission of Sewers is now only a matter of history. A committee of accounts for the year was then proposed by Mr. Hawkes, consisting of Mr. Henry Harrison, Mr. Bathurst, Mr. Baylis, Mr. Knight, Mr. Biffin, and himself.

After considerable opposition, the committee was appointed. Mr. Le Breton's motion to increase the salary to the proposed surveyor to 600*l.* per annum was, after much discussion, adjourned; the Court considering that Mr. Le Breton should define the duties, and settle the salary after, rather than arrange the salary first, leaving the duties to be performed an after consideration.

Court adjourned to Friday, the 9th instant, at eleven, special, to swear a jury; "To inquire into such things as shall be given them in charge, and to present what houses, lands, and tenements are benefitted by the new making, repairing, or cleansing the common sewers in the eastern division of the Westminster sewers, or that may receive hurt, loss, or disadvantage, by defect of new making, repairing, or cleansing such sewers; and also the annual rental value of the several premises, for apportioning, according to the interest of each individual, his due share of the expense appertaining to the sewage."

THE STATE OF THE SEWERS.

Sir,—It is to be hoped that you will give more information respecting the sewer in the New-road.^a What is its size? What is its shape? What fall has it? How many gully-holes? How many inlets from house drains? In what way was the work performed in taking out the number of loads of deposit? What the particulars and total of cost?

Two deposit wells, each with a vessel or bucket to hold one load of deposit, if drawn up on an average once a month, might, in seven years, have prevented 168 loads entering that sewer. One deposit-well might be under the gully-hole, but the object should be to prevent the water falling too far at once, to prevent it stirring up the deposit. Above each deposit-well should be a shaft with a cover. From the side of the shaft, the water, when the well is filled to the proper height, should pass through a grated opening into the sewer. Through a hole in the cover of the shaft, by means of a rod or wire, the depth of the deposit in the bucket may at any time be ascertained. When full, or on proper occasions, the bucket with its contents to be drawn up, emptied, and replaced. This work, with proper apparatus, may be done in a few minutes.

Would it be wise to try to force all the silt, &c., from the New-road to the Thames?

Whatever form a sewer has, would it not be economy to proportion the quality and substance of the material, so that all parts should be as nearly as possible equally durable?

A LOOKER-ON.

* We printed a series of questions relative to sewers a short time ago, it will be remembered, which were furnished by the same Intelligent writer. In reference to one of those questions, a correspondent says:—

"There can be no doubt of the advisability of carrying gas and water mains through the sewers, which should be both sufficiently capa-

cious for the purpose: this would prevent the disturbance of the streets upon the first laying of the mains, and remedy the justly complained of evil of the continued opening of the ground to carry out repairs and alterations, and would afford the means of their being at all times open to inspection, and prevent the very great loss from leakage that the companies at present labour under. And this accommodation would be accompanied by a great saving of expense; in return for which, the gas and water companies should pay a rental, and this, I have no doubt, they would most readily do. A patent, now expired, was taken out by a gentleman of the name of Williams, who spent a large sum of money in endeavouring to bring it to bear. It was for the purpose of forming sub-ways in the streets of London; the lower portion forming the sewer, and the upper being arranged for the reception of gas and water pipes. But this, although acknowledged to be a great good, was prevented from being carried out by the great expense that would be incurred, as the sewerage was already arranged. Where this is not the case, this plan should be adopted, and benefit to all parties would be the result. The papers, drawings, and data connected with the patent are, I believe, in the possession of Mr. John Williams, of 29, Bucklebury, who, I have no doubt, would be very happy to give any information required on this subject, and which is worthy of serious consideration.

I am, Sir, yours, &c.

T. A. H.

Brompton.

ARCHITECTS' CHARGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

Our recent remarks on this subject have led several architects to forward us opinions and items of information in connection with it, and of these we shall hereafter make use.

Mr. George Wightwick, of Plymouth, having on several occasions found objections raised to the payment of commission, has printed a letter, which he places in the hands of those parties who apply to him. This letter views the question of responsibility broadly, and being very suggestive, we are led to think the publication of it will be useful to the profession.

"To prevent misunderstanding, as to the nature and extent of my responsibilities, in accepting the honour of your employment, I beg leave, very respectfully, to solicit your kind attention to the following:—

It is presumed your primary object in securing the services of an architect involves the recognition of his pretensions as an artist. The ordinary builder may construct the edifice required: you apply to an architect for the superadded graces of correct design and suitable decoration.

Secondly, you desire his experience and ingenuity in respect to convenience; to be shown in such a compact and uniform arrangement of plan, as will prove strictly conformable to beauty of elevation, and pervading architectural propriety.

Thirdly, you employ him to afford the drawings and specifications necessary to arrive at the cost of your proposed building, and to make the best of his allowed conditions, so that, if you cannot have all you desire, you may have as much as your means will allow.

Fourthly, you engage him to supply all such working drawings and occasional superintendence, as shall insure the accurate and substantial execution of the works, so far as regards their architectural truth and permanent strength.

Fifthly, you require him to control the builder's claims upon you for payment, and to adjust all variations in the cost, induced by deviation from your first intentions.

Such being the architect's duties, he next submits to your timely consideration his exemption from certain liabilities too frequently supposed to attach to him.

1st. In matters of taste. He engages to give you what he conceives to be correct, and to the amount only which your means allow, and not to sacrifice, without reluctance, his reputation as an artist to your individual wishes, nor to suffer under your censure for limiting his decorations to their just proportion in the general outlay.

2nd. Convenience.—Any partial disarrangement of the plans, first mutually agreed upon, releases him from the censure which may afterwards attach to them as a whole. It is a common error to regard as trivial, alterations which seriously affect the entire design.

3rd. Estimates.—He does not engage to make out, under your own direction, a design, the execution of which shall be within the limits of your intended outlay. All he can safely do is to learn what you require, and how you desire it to be done; and then, by measure and value, to inform you of the cost. He will not pledge himself to any particular amount: nor will he admit, as at all applying to himself, those imputations of *carelessness*, which too frequently follow where employers, by almost imperceptible degrees, enlarge upon their original instructions.

4th. Superintendence.—The architect is not employed as an operative builder or clerk of the works. It must be clearly understood, that his occasional visits and working drawings can only have reference to architectural accuracy and the liberal fulfilment of the leading articles of the specification, as affecting construction generally. If the builder, his foreman, or operatives be careless, and a competent clerk of the works be not engaged, roofs may leak, plumbing may partially fail, plastering may crack or become discoloured, drains may yield offensive odours, joinery may shrink, chimneys may return their smoke (indeed the latter nuisance may occur in spite of all precaution) and many other evils may shew themselves, without, necessarily, impugning the character of the architect, or in the least affecting the general stability of the structure. The most trying annoyances may originate in the most trifling defects of workmanship, and nothing short of a vigilant clerk of the works, exclusively employed without intermission, can insure perfection in matters of constructive detail.

5th. Settling accounts.—It is common for the architect to be equally beset by his employer and the builder; the one complaining of too great allowance, the other of too little. The architect does not engage to please either.

Terms.—Five per cent. on the outlay; travelling expenses; and the value of time occupied in travelling, reckoned at three guineas per diem. Expenses and value of time shared between different employers residing on the same line or in the same vicinity. But any fixed terms have reference to the unaltering progress of the employer's first settled determination; so that all subsequent deviations from the course which has been followed in strict obedience to instruction, will involve an extra charge proportionate to the extra time employed.

Again, these terms will not hold good in certain cases where old buildings are altered, or where the work involves a smaller outlay than will compensate (at the usual rate of percentage), for the time employed. In the former case, the labour of surveying the old structure, and of taking plans, elevations, and sections of the same, may require remuneration apart from that which is charged on the new building; and, in respect to works of small outlay, where much taste or economic management is required, the charge can only be justly regulated by the value of time.

It must be considered, that the labour of an architect frequently bears a ratio inverse to the amount of expenditure. In a large building, constructed under liberal circumstances, he charges 5*l.* for every 100*l.* well expended; in a small one, erected under very limiting injunctions, he may deserve 5*l.* for every 100*l.* saved. He is bound, in common honesty, to keep down the cost in the first instance; but, if further reduction be necessary, it is surely too hard to expect from him, unrequited, that additional trouble which reduces his percentage.

Should the foregoing be admitted as reasonable, I am ready to devote my best skill and care to your service."

NEW LUNATIC ASYLUM FOR THE COUNTY OF SURREY.—At the Surrey General Quarter Sessions, held last Monday, in the Sessions House, Newington, Mr. Freshfield brought forward a motion relative to the necessity of providing an additional building for the pauper lunatics of the county. It appears that the present asylum is capable of accommodating only 400 patients, and that room is required for 700. The sum of 200,000*l.* is spoken of as being the probable cost of the proposed new building.

^a See p. 130, Vol. 117.